

**Remarks of Nancy Trainer on Proposed FY 2021 FCPS School Budget
on behalf of the Education Committee of the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
May 12, 2020—Fairfax County School Board Meeting**

My name is Nancy Trainer, and I am co-chair of the Education Committee of the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations.* Tonight I am speaking on behalf of the Federation's Education Committee.

Some of you are not, perhaps, familiar with the Federation itself, or how unusual it is that I am speaking this evening. The Federation is an 80-year-old umbrella organization for homeowner, civic, and community associations. We are proud to work alongside FCPS lobbying in Richmond and traditionally are represented within FCPS' many committees and task forces. By this point in the budget cycle, we often don't feel the need to provide additional input.

But these are not usual times. We are unusually concerned with FCPS' reaction to the Coronavirus pandemic, particularly with what we believe is a misplaced emphasis on equity concerns *at the cost of* unifying our community by providing our children with an excellent education.

Excellence is job #1 at FCPS, implicit within your mission statement: "[T]o inspire and empower students to meet high academic standards, lead ethical lives, and be responsible and innovative global citizens." Now more than ever, our children need us to empower them in reaching for those high standards. Fairfax's strong support for its public schools is predicated on their excellence.

Excellence will now require FCPS to engage in continuous innovation. Our students may return in some form to our school buildings, but they may encounter a hybrid of distance learning and in-person learning, and we may need to shift quickly as circumstances require. We accept that some students and some teachers will not adapt easily, and we share the concern that this risks exacerbating particular imbalances. However, our bigger risk is paralysis. We risk failing to meet this moment quickly and boldly.

We believe that FCPS' large size and diverse student body are assets—not obstacles—to the kind of nimble experimentation the moment requires. But to unleash pedagogical innovation, FCPS must loosen its focus on equivalence among regions and among schools. As Emerson said, "Consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." Now is the time for us all to stand together as FCPS. Yet if we are to support every child by name and by need, then we cannot treat all children the same.

We commend Superintendent Brabrand for his strong collaboration with County Executive Bryan Hill, which facilitated a budget that properly sets the same priorities in our schools that our County has set for its lines of business. We believe that the adjustments proposed in this budget are appropriate and prudent, particularly as they preserve school-based positions and maintain existing programs.

We also commend FCPS for pivoting quickly to provide our families with hundreds of thousands of meals since school closed on March 13. Finally, we look forward to hearing updates from you on what educational practices are working best in our new learning environment.

Thank you for your time this evening, and for all the time you spend on various school matters. We look forward to working together to help support our schools.

* The two co-chairs of the Education Committee are Nancy Trainer and Ed Saperstein.